TYCI

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Catriona Reilly talks the German arm of the controversial feminist group.

WORDS WITH FEMEN

I recently visited Berlin, a city famous for its subversive counter culture and grim history; not somewhere you would expect Mattel to dump its Barbie Dreamhouse Experience (™). Sitting rather ironically just in front of Karl Marx Alee, for 16 Euros the life-sized replica Barbie house allows visitors to experience a day in the life of Barbie, having their hair did and baking amongst other things (unlike most real Barbie's which spend their life having their hair cut off and being thrown down the 'Ski jump'). Having never had a Barbie, instead owning Ski Cindy and the wonky, off brand 'Tracy' from Woolworths, the Dreamhouse Experience was somewhat lost on me, however FEMEN did not feel quite so apathetic. They launched a series of protests outside the house, objecting mainly to what it represented, so I decided to capitalise (no pun intended) on the event and catch up with FEMEN Germany activist Theresa to find out what the controversial group is all about.

WHAT YOU DO AND WHAT YOU STAND FOR AS PART OF FEMEN?

I've been part of three protests so far. The Barbie protest and two for the prisoners in Tunisia. Besides I'm also translating a lot from English into German, getting things organised within the group. There's a lot to do at the moment. We just founded an organisation, things are starting to get more serious and structured.

CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT THE RECENT PROTEST AT THE BARBIE DREAMHOUSE?

We tried to point out that Mattel was creating a godlike puppet which shall be adored and aimed to be like by little girls. Barbie's lifestyle is out dated and really 'sexistic', the jobs she got, the fatal beauty ideals she presents... Something we had to question in public!

DO YOU THINK HAVING A FEMALE CHANCELLOR IN GERMANY IS A HELP OR A HINDRANCE?

Of course it's an issue, but that doesn't mean that we stand behind her policies... She didn't really support us during the time our girls were imprisoned in Tunisia, although we put a lot of pressure on her. She's really conservative and in this case not her gender but what she does is definitely more important and to be discussed.

HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT FEMALE PROSTITUTION WHICH IS LEGAL AND HIGHLY VISIBLE IN BERLIN AS WELL AS IN OTHER GERMAN CITIES?

It is legal, which makes Germany also a leader when it gets to human trafficking. The fact that prostitutes can have health insurance and pay taxes is not really an effort. We want the Swedish model. I'm generally against prostitution but I can't really patronise women for doing so when it's their own choice (that doesn't include the ones who do it because of poverty though). Lots of people justify it by saying it's one of the oldest professions... Tradition or time is not an argument. It is horrible that most men grow up knowing they can buy a woman if they want to. Things definitely have to change!

WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR GREATEST SUCCESS TO DATE?

FEMEN's biggest success was probably the Putin action, no one of the participants expected to get so close and I guess whenever we get a new member or a new country is joining us this is a huge success! We have to spread, the more of us standing up the better. My personal success was being one meter away from Angela Merkel the other day and shouting at her.

WHAT DO YOU THINK NEEDS TO CHANGE FOR FEMINISM TO FLOURISH? IS IT A QUESTION OF EDUCATION OR ACTION?

Oh, I think this seclusion has to stop. We need activism as much as the theoretic feminism, there's a lot of trouble between groups and of course there are different approaches and opinions but I think we have the same goal and that is being forgotten far too often. There's time and energy being wasted on fighting us, which depicts us not being taken seriously (bitch fight). We have to be happy that there's such diversity so we can reach a lot of different people. We have to get the men involved as well! We have to win them for the good cause like Harvey Milk used to do. Men shouldn't feel threatened by us in general. We want equality not matriarchy.

THIS IS AN EXCERPT. FOR THE FULL ARTICLE, VISIT TYCI.ORG.UK. FOR MORE ON FEMEN GERMANY, VISIT FACEBOOK.COM/FEMENGERMANY.

Lis Ferla talks to the Scottish all-female comic collective.

When Glasgow comic artist Gill Hatcher decided to found her own women-only comic collective, she wasn't setting out to make some sort of big political statement.

'I just thought it would be quite fun to make a comic that was all women,' she explains. 'After I left school I was inspired by people I was involved with in the Glasgow comics scene to make my own little photocopied zines and start selling them locally, but at the time it really was a bit of a boys' club and I felt like my stuff didn't fit very well alongside a lot of the comics that were getting made at the time.'

Four years later, Team Girl Comic is now a thriving, financially sustainable small press with stockists across the UK. The collective is about to publish its eighth issue, to be launched with a circus-themed extravaganza at Glasgow's Plan B Books this Friday. The collective is almost thirty members strong, according to their website, according to their website, but new contributors - of any skill level - are always welcome. As long as they have a story to tell.

Gill and co-editor Claire Yvette never really considered themselves to be comics fans when they were growing up, regardless of how many times they picked up the Beano or Twinkle. For Gill, drawing 'silly, crudely-made comics' was a way of passing time in boring classes and making her friends laugh in school. 'Eventually, it just sort of clicked: I like drawing, and I make these comics, and people actually like them and they think that they are funny so why don't I actually try to draw the comics well and see if that works out?' she says. It turned out that she was rather good at it, and meeting some of the inspiring people of the Glasgow indie comics scene was enough to keep her going.

The first couple of issues featured friends and family, including Claire and sister Jessica - but the project was soon to snowball. 'I've always written, but I tend to be quite guarded about what I show people - but because Gill was involved in Team Girl, I thought I'd give it a go,' Claire says. 'I think like a lot of people I had always

equated comics with superheroes and a scene that was completely alien to me, so despite reading the Bunty or Calvin and Hobbes I never thought that counted. It's only in the past couple of years I've come to realise that comics don't need to be DC or Marvel, and I have gotten into more graphic novels and indie comics.'

Not that there isn't a place for superheroes, both in Team Girl itself and among its artists' influences. Coralie, who draws under the pen name Cacachute, started drawing comics two years ago as a way to write and tell stories 'without necessarily having to be the best, most literary writer'. After overcoming her initial shyness to get involved with the collective, Coralie has been able to channel her love of sci-fi, horror and 'classic' superhero stories into her contributions to the comic.

It's for this reason that the comics themselves rarely have explicit themes, although on a few occasions these have emerged by accident as an issue has come together. It's something Gill feels quite strongly about as part of the inclusive, non-elitist nature of the comic. 'I've always been wary of themes, as a lot of our artists are quite new to the comics scene and I don't want to make the task more difficult,' she says. 'We haven't ruled it out, and we might do a themed issue one day. But Team Girl is a platform for any female-identified writers in or from Scotland who have a story to tell, whether or not they come from an artistic background and whatever their style, be it fiction or non fiction...'

In terms of content, although recent issues have seen a trend towards autobiographical stories the Team Girl manta seems to be that if you can make a book about something, you can also make a comic about it. Gill likes to channel her interest in conservation issues into wildlife comics, featuring animal characters and nature facts, while Coralie enjoys drawing 'spaceships and monsters'. 'It's a medium with rules, just like cinema or literature, but those are the only limitations on how you tell the story,' Coralie says. 'If anything it's more experimental - and really open as well, as an art form…'

THIS IS AN EXCERPT. FOR THE FULL ARTICLE, VISIT TYCI.ORG.UK. FOR MORE ON TEAM GIRL COMIC, VISIT TEAMGIRLCOMIC.COM. LIS ALSO BLOGS AT LASTYEARSGIRL.PIXLET.NET.

INTERVIEW:

RAPHAELLE STANDELL-PRESTON

Amanda Aitken caught up with the Canadian front-woman of Blue Hawaii to talk about their latest album, Untogether.

IT'S BEEN A FEW YEARS SINCE THE LAST BLUE HAWAII RELEASE. WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN UP TO?

I have been predominantly touring and recording with my other band [Braids]. I got a house and then moved out of it. Bought plants, sowed seeds, raised pigeons on my balcony. Lots of things.

THE TITLE OF THE NEW ALBUM, UNTOGETHER, LENDS ITSELF TO QUESTIONING. IS THERE A STORY BEHIND THE NAME OF THE ALBUM?

For me it was this sense of not feeling together while recording it. I felt very much in pieces and the album became a process of collecting myself and bringing those pieces together. I know Alex [Cowan, the other half of Blue Hawaii] who is involved more heavily in the production side of things, saw the symbolism of untogether in the records cut and paste melodic and post production approach, the fact that we were working in separation and ripping apart each others findings. The community was also leaving, our friends were not as together as before, and us as friends and lovers were also feeling that strain.

WHEN LISTENING TO THE ALBUM AS A WHOLE, IT FEELS AS IF A PARTICULAR THEME OR TOPIC WAS FLOATING AROUND DURING THE CREATIVE PROCESS. IS THIS THE CASE AND IF SO CAN YOU TELL US A BIT ABOUT THE IDEAS BEHIND IT?

I guess in most art there is the idea and exploration of self, for the artist - the creator - must look inside themselves or at least depend on themselves for

inspiration. I've never been one to comment much on other people or outsider scenarios, I usually write about how I'm feeling or what I've experienced. I felt quite terrible during this time - having major identity issues. I don't think the question of 'who am I?' is ever answered. Over time we just learn to be more gentle with ourselves. To stop pounding that question to a pulp. To silence it a little bit, and just let ourselves live a little. The record helped me do that. At its conception I felt really in the shadows of who I thought I was of who I wanted to be, and by its close, I felt I had dug up a lot and learned to accept that dusted off person.

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE SOUND OF YOUR MUSIC?

More than any other genres I see our music as some form of electronic music. Mainly because its so technology dependent on its construction. Our music though has an organic feeling to it as well - Alex's synths always sound like birds singing and then there is a real voice in the mix too. If I could make up a genre I would call our music natural electronic. It's still quite human.
What is your favourite piece of kit to use when in the studio and/or when playing live and why?That is more of an Alex question. I usually just use whatever he has open on the computer because I don't really know how to find it. He uses operator a lot for building synth sounds and I know that we like the 808, but of course, that's a given. That kit can never be over used.

TYCI IS AN ALL FEMALE COLLECTIVE BASED IN GLASGOW, COVERING NEWS, MUSIC AND ALL THINGS FEMINIST. ARE THERE ANY WOMEN OUT THERE IN THE WORLD THAT ARE OF INSPIRATION TO YOU?

Bjork. So happy she exists. Thanking the gods for her.

THE ELECTRO MUSIC SCENE CAN SOMETIMES BE PORTRAYED AS A VERY MALE DOMINATED ENVIRONMENT, SOMETIMES MORE SO BY THE WAY IN WHICH THE MEDIA PORTRAY AND PLACE FEMALE ELECTRO ARTISTS IN THE MUSIC INDUSTRY. DO YOU HAVE ANY INDUSTRY HORROR STORIES FROM BEING THE FRONT-WOMAN OF BOTH BRAIDS AND BLUE HAWAII?

I try not to think of the shortcomings that I may experience in the music industry as a woman. I find as soon as I discuss it or admit to it I begin to victimize myself, and that in my mind seems a hindrance to moving forward and empowering women. I try to just do what I do proudly and strongly. When I type this it seems a little contradictory of me to be rooting for girls and to not want to address misogyny, but sometimes you just need to say 'fuck it' and focus on what you can do and not life's inevitable setbacks. Sometimes people make rude sexual comments to me on stage and I verbally assure them that, yes, they are in fact idiots.

THIS IS AN EXCERPT. FOR THE FULL ARTICLE, VISIT TYCI.ORG.UK. FOR MORE ON BLUE HAWAII, VISIT ARBUTUSRECORDS.COM.

INTERVIEW: AMY BLOOM

Rosa Campbell talks to the American author about her upcoming novel, Lucky Us.

Amy Bloom has written two novels and three collections of short stories. She's written for the New Yorker and her stories have appeared in The Best American Short Stories. Her prose is gripping and refreshingly incisive. She, unlike so many, is not prone to the bombastic tangent. Naturally, I was excited (may have pumped my fist in the air at work.) when she agreed to do an interview with me. Her new novel Lucky Us will be out in 2014.

IN A RECENT NEW YORK TIMES INTERVIEW YOU TALK ABOUT 'UNABASHEDLY LOVING' YOUR NEW BOOK LITTLE SWEET POTATO. DO YOU THINK WRITERS WHO UNABASHEDLY LOVE WHAT THEY'VE WRITTEN GET A DIFFICULT TIME? DO FEMALE WRITERS PARTICULARLY GET A DIFFICULT TIME IF THEY LOVE THEIR OWN WORK?

I think unless you think that your work is a dismal failure, you love your book. There are a number of disadvantages in the larger world to being a female writer. I don't think we are criticized more roundly than male writers for loving our work. I said "unabashedly" because I had no ambivalence, no lingering regret, no wish that I could have done better. All of which accompanies my books for adults.

CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT YOUR NEW NOVEL LUCKY US?

I sure can... It's a novel about two half sisters who meet for the first time in adolescence and their search across America in the 1940s, for fame and fortune.

IN AN INTERVIEW IN AUGUST LAST YEAR YOU SAID YOU'RE IN THE WEEDS WITH THIS NOVEL. HOW IS THE PROCESS OF WRITING GOING NOW?

The process of writing is going fantastically well now because I turned the book in April. Nothing is better than having written.

WHAT IS IT LIKE TO BE IN THE WEEDS WITH A PROJECT?

Terrible, horrible, a lot like what I imagine having swine flu is like.

IN THE LETTER Q, YOU GIVE YOUR YOUNGER SELF SOME VERY SAGE, USEFUL ADVICE THAT IS ALSO QUITE CANDID. IT IS VERY DIFFERENT FROM THE WAY ADULTS OFTEN SPEAK TO YOUNG PEOPLE ABOUT DRUGS AND SEX, ESPECIALLY IN A SCHOOL SETTING. WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT THE ADVICE YOUNG PEOPLE ARE ROUTINELY GIVEN AT SCHOOL?

I think the advice that students are given at school is the advice you get from representatives of authority in a public institution. The job of talking to young people about wise and unwise behavior belongs to their parents. That none of us ever do as good a job as we should does not mean that school will or can do a better job.

OUR BLOG IS READ AND CREATED BY LOTS OF YOUNG WOMEN IN THE CREATIVE ARTS, WHO ALSO FIGHT INJUSTICE. DO YOU HAVE ANY PARTICULAR ADVICE FOR US?

As Winston Churchill said, 'Never, never, never give up.'

YOU'VE TALKED ELOQUENTLY, POETICALLY, ELSEWHERE ABOUT THE KIND OF FOOD YOU LIKE. IF YOU WERE A PLATE OF FOOD YOURSELF, WHAT WOULD YOU BE?

I would like to be a watermelon, feta cheese and mint salad with a small piece of perfectly cooked flank steak, and an ear of just picked fresh corn.

FINALLY, WHAT ARE YOU READING AT THE MOMENT?

Colum McCann's TransAtlantic and Blanche Weisen Cook's second volume on Eleanor Roosevelt.

FOR MORE ON AMY'S WORK, VISIT AMYBLOOM.COM.

Interview: Bidisha

Lauren Mayberry talks to journalist, author and activist Bidisha.

WHEN DID YOU START IDENTIFYING AS A FEMINIST?

I've always been a feminist, since I was 13 or so. I got involved in Riot Grrrl at 14. The reality of misogyny, through stereotypes, patronage, sexual harassment, the way we are either ignored or slanderously and untruthfully portrayed in all aspects of cultural life, the extreme exploitation of our labour (including sexual labour) and marginalisation from nearly all positions of power is completely and utterly obvious. People who don't think we're living in a misogynistic society are living in a dreamworld of their own, as these things really are just in front of our faces - and that was as obvious to me at 13 as it is at 34…

WE KEEP HEARING PEOPLE SAY THAT THERE HAS BEEN A 'RESURGENCE' IN FEMINISM IN THE UK IN THE PAST FEW YEARS. DO YOU THINK THIS IS THE CASE?

Yes - in the last 5 years there has been an extremely strong resurrection of feminism not just in the UK and internationally and it's fantastic to see. Every event I go to which is even tangentially about women in society is packed. There is enormous interest, concern, dynamism and activism around a combination of factors, some new, some sadly very longstanding: endemic male sexual harassment; endemic male sexual violence, rape, gendered bullying, stalking; the fact that the statistic of 2 women a week being killed by their current or former 'partner' not having changed; the extremely low rape conviction rate and the entirely of rape culture,

in which victims are blamed, silenced, attacked or told that they are lying and the men who attack them are excused, pardoned and under-punished even when convicted; the under-representation of women in media, politics, the arts, law and so on at high levels and our over-use as exploited, underpaid, overworked labourers further down the hierarchy; the pay gap; the unequal labour division within the home (which is a massive euphemism for men not doing their fair 50% of cooking, cleaning, drudge work, family admin, care of parents and all childcare); the effect of misogynist porn on beauty aesthetics and also on the way boys expect girls to behave and the way boys treat girls in relationships; body anxiety, dysmorphia and self-hate due to the prevalence of unrealistic beauty standards and myths; the fact that we are still having to fight for and defend our right to abortion...

WE HAVE PREVIOUSLY SPOKEN TO SOME FEMALE JOURNALISTS WHO FELT THEY WERE TREATED DIFFERENTLY BECAUSE THEY WERE WOMEN. HAVE YOU FOUND THIS TO BE THE CASE IN YOUR WORK?

I'm afraid I've witnessed and experienced incredible openly casual misogyny, man-worshipping, the marginalisation of women and the exploitation of women's labour, the belittlement of women's achievements and talking-down of women and the massive under-representation of women as speakers, experts, pioneers, figureheads etc in every area of the media in which I've worked and also in the realm of arts events, prizes, commissions and star opportunities. The perpetrators are not always men - one of the most shocking things about patriarchal misogyny is the way in which many women have internalised it and will put together a roster / spread / event / exhibition / festival featuring 80% men, 20% women. It's disgusting. The Culture Show, The London Review of Books, World Book Club on BBC radio are all produced or edited by women and yet severely and markedly discriminate against women. The examples of casual misogyny are too depressing to go into, but all involve the casual, petty and open trashing and demeaning of women. It's endemic - part of the air we breathe.

IF YOU COULD INTERVIEW ANYONE ABOUT ANY TOPIC, WHO WOULD YOU CHOOSE AND WHY?

I'd talk to my mother about her life and career and write about it. Or Hillary Clinton, Aung San Suu Kyi, J K Rowling, Madonna.

AND FINALLY, WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO ASPIRING JOURNALISTS?

First and foremost, do what you love. But also: be strategic, work hard, be clear and value yourself. I believe that labour should be paid, even if you're fine with not being paid at the very beginning. Be present: meet people, communicate with your peers. Don't compete: it's pointless and worthless. And keep a general sense of what you'd like to achieve. So... you'd like to edit a web site; you'd like to be an international affairs reporter; you'd like to write a novel? Go for that dream in practical ways. Everything is achievable if you are talented, shrewd, diligent and committed. And work hard... but not too hard.

THIS IS AN EXCERPT. FOR THE FULL ARTICLE, VISIT TYCI.ORG.UK. FOR MORE ON BIDISHA'S WORK, VISIT BIDISHA-ONLINE.BLOGSPOT.CO.UK.

TYCI LIVE #10

A live set from
AGGI DOOM (Glasgow 'NO MO')
&
MWX
on the DJ decks

SATURDAY 17 AUGUST
11pm – 3am
Bloc, 117 Bath Street, Glasgow
FREE before midnight; £2 after

Anyone who writes TYCI on their knuckles
will get in free after midnight too

TYCI RADIO / PODCASTS

Episode 3 of the TYCI podcast is online now and can be found at soundcloud.com/tyciblog. Our next Subcity show will be Thursday 15 August, 5 – 7pm.
Tune in at subcity.org/shows/tyci.

Subcity Radio

TYCI is a collective run by women.
We have a website where we write about things which affect us and put together features on art, theatre, music, film, politics, current affairs and most things in between. We also talk about similar stuff on our monthly radio show on Subcity.

This zine is a collection of some of the content from our site and is distributed in conjunction with our monthly live event at Bloc.

If you would like to get involved, reply to any of our articles or just generally say hi, hit us up on contact.tyci@gmail.com or visit tyci.org.uk.

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